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AUTHOR Keefe, Carolyn
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ABSTRACT

To deal with the time shortage problem while simultaneously stressing student educational development, a system was designed and implemented to manage a peer forensics coaching program. The program taps the peer coaching potential available on every team and generates academic credit and letter grades for the peer coaches by utilizing a modification of W. Castetter and R. Heisler's management-by-objectives approach. The program involves a preliminary step (declaration of intent); a pre-appraisal planning conference; a performance appraisal; a performance progress review conference; and a post-development review appraisal. Benefits include increased coaching staff and number of hours devoted to coaching in a given semester, educational benefits for both peer coaches and coachees, and a systematic way to appraise peer coaching. (SR)

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Carolyn Keefe

West Chester University

Presented at the 76th Annual Meeting of the

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DEVELOPING AND MANAGING A PEER FORENSICS COACHING PROGRAM

Carolyn Keefe*

Reasons for Developing a Program

For the usual Director of Forensics, the word "shortage" has ever-present meanings--a shortage of funds, office space, vehicles, nearby tournaments, publicity, and time. Each lack can have adverse consequences on a program, but the latter poses the greatest threat to its educational goals. When time is scarce, the coaching sessions may be neither as frequent nor as long as they need to be. Although some competitors, particularly the varsity members, can make progress with little help from a coach, the novices deprived of coaching tend to flounder, become discouraged, and drop off the team. Therefore, finding more coaching time may be the most important concern faced by the Director of Forensics.

Linked to the need for additional coaching hours is the Director's interest in expanding the learning opportunities for team members. One way to abet this on-going objective is to put students to work as teachers[1] because the process of teaching is in itself a means of learning. Backing this axiom is contemporary research on peer tutoring that shows "the achievement gains for the tutors are often as great or greater than those for the 'tutees.'"[2]

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*CAROLYN KEEFE, Professor of Speech Communication at West Chester University, West Chester, Pennsylvania, 19383, served there as Director of Forensics from 1971-88.

Model for the Program

This paper delineates a system designed and implemented for dealing with the time shortage problem while simultaneously stressing student educational development. The system taps the peer coaching potential that is available on every team. It also generates academic credit and letter grades for the peer coaches by utilizing a version of the management-by-objectives (MBO) approach, which can be defined as "a managerial philosophy and technique that attempts to draw on people's needs for achievement, competence, and autonomy by allowing them to set their own objectives, goals, and performance criteria."[3]

To insure that the goals of individuals will contribute to the overall goals of the organization and that progress toward reaching them is maintained, conferences between managers and subordinates are essential. Toward these ends Castetter and Heisler set up a five-step performance appraisal model, using it for managing school administrative personnel: (1) Pre-Appraisal Planning Conference, (2) Performance Appraisal, (3) Performance Progress Review Conference, (4) Individual Development Program, and (5) Post-Development Program Review Conference.[4]

With three modifications, the Castetter/Heisler model can be applied to the managing of peer forensics coaches. First, the addition of a preliminary step is needed for peer coaches to notify the Director of Forensics that they intend to register for the program. Second, in the Pre-Appraisal Planning Conference Step, rather than having the manager (in this case, the Director of Forensics) meet individually with the subordinate (the peer coach), the forensics adaptation calls for a meeting with all the peer coaches. Third, the Post-Development

Program Review Conference takes the form of a written, not an in-person appraisal. Both the second and third modifications are time-saving measures.[5]

Managing the Program

The program operationally defines peer forensics coaching as a credit-generating[6] MBO system whereby an experienced speech/debate team member[7] guides a less experienced member of the same team through the process of tournament preparation. The preliminary step and the five steps in the appraisal system are described below and depicted in the Appendix on page 16. The evaluation forms that are mentioned were designed specifically for the program.

Preliminary Step: Declaration of Intent

1. Students interested in obtaining one hour of credit for coaching must notify the Director of Forensics by the end of the registration period for the upcoming semester. The student must have competed for at least one semester in a minimum of four intercollegiate forensics tournaments.
2. At least two weeks before the start of the semester, the peer coaches will be given written notification of the Pre-Appraisal Planning Conference.

Step 1: Pre-Appraisal Planning Conference

1. This meeting (announced above) will be held in the office of the Director of Forensics during the first week of each semester.
2. The peer coaches and the Director of Forensics will clarify their objectives by briefly discussing these topics: (a) the goals of forensics as an educational process, and (b) the means of carrying out these goals through the particular forensics program.

Also, a link will be made with the educational goals of the institution as stated in the college/university catalog.

3. Although each peer coach has been and still is being coached, he or she may need to review the stages in the coaching process.[8] These will be delineated by the Director of Forensics. An important emphasis will be the setting of goals for each coaching session.

4. Performance standards for each peer coach will be established:

   a. Each student will coach one forensics participant (henceforth known as "coachee")[9] in debate or one individual event. The coachee will be a novice, i.e., a person who has competed in less than four tournaments.

   b. Each peer coach will personally contact his or her coachee and work out a coaching schedule that includes a minimum of four fifty-minute sessions before the first tournament, two before the second, and one before the third in which the event/debate will be presented.

   c. Each peer coach will hold a post-tournament ballot review with his or her coachee.

   d. Each peer coach will keep a coaching log that describes: (1) contact attempts, successful or not, (2) important aspects of each coaching session, including goal(s), strengths/weaknesses of the coachee's performance and how the peer coach dealt with each, (3) post-tournament review of the coachee's ballots, and (4) degree of success in reaching the goal(s) set in Step 4.1. below.

5. The following appraisal procedures for peer coaches, including the

evaluation forms, will be explained by the Director of Forensics:

a. Between the first and second tournaments, the Director of Forensics will observe the peer coach in a direct coaching session. Form A: Rating Sheet for Observation of Peer Forensics Coach (see Appendix, page 12) will be used.

b. Each coachee will evaluate his or her peer coach by employing Form B: Rating Sheet for Coachee's Appraisal of Peer Forensics Coach (see Appendix, page 13). This will be done immediately following the last tournament for which peer coaching services are provided.

c. Immediately following the last tournament (see 5.b. above), the peer coach will submit his or her coaching log. The criteria on Form C: Rating Sheet for Peer Coaching Log (see Appendix, page 14) will serve as the basis for appraisal.

d. These grading weights will hold: Form A=25%, Form B=25%, and Form C=50% of the peer coach's final grade.

6. The Director of Forensics will then present a list of coachees, and the peer coaches will help match coaches with coachees. The forensics experience of the peer coaches, their strengths and weaknesses, and their personal preferences will be considered. This selection process will help the peer coaches set their individual performance targets.

7. The Pre-Appraisal Planning Conference will conclude with a brief discussion of how the performance standards and the appraisal procedures are linked to the educational goals of the team.

Step 2: Performance Appraisal

1. The Director of Forensics will observe the peer coach in a direct

fifty-minute coaching situation (see Step 1.5.a.).

2. The Director of Forensics will use Form A on which to record evaluative comments.

Step 3: Performance Progress Review Conference

1. Immediately following the observation above, the Director of Forensics will meet alone with the peer coach to review Form A and to discuss his or her learning experiences as a coach.
2. The student's successes and difficulties in peer coaching will be discussed.
3. The Director of Forensics will give counsel on how to lessen or overcome the difficulties.

Step 4: Individual Development Program

1. The peer coach will set one or more coaching goals that he or she wants to accomplish. The goal(s) will be recorded in the appropriate place on Form A. The peer coach will retain the original sheet; the Director of Forensics will keep a file copy.
2. When the coaching assignment ends (usually after the third tournament), the peer coach will assess and record his or her progress in reaching the goal(s). The fourth section of the log will consist of this assessment.

Step 5: Post-Development Program Review Appraisal

1. The Director of Forensics will collect the peer coach's log and the coachee's appraisal (Form B).
2. Using Form C the Director of Forensics will evaluate the log and then assign a grade based on the ratio specified under step 1.5.d.
3. The Director of Forensics will enter the peer coach's grade (A, B, C, D, F) on Form C and will return the log, along with the originals of Forms A, B, and C, to the peer coach. File copies will be retained.

4. Unless the peer coach is a graduating senior, he or she will be able to continue receiving one credit hour for coaching each semester using the above system.

Assessment of the Program

Instituted in the spring semester of 1980, the program continued through the last eight and a half years of the author's tenure as Director of Forensics. During that period the following strengths and weaknesses of the system emerged.

Program Strengths

1. The program increases the coaching staff and the number of hours devoted to coaching in a given semester. Simple calculations show this statement to be true. Each peer coach is required to spend a minimum of 400 minutes in coaching, including 50 minutes in Step 2: Performance Appraisal. (Many peer coaches far exceed this time frame.) To gain this supplemental coaching service, the Director of Forensics must devote approximately 155 minutes per peer coach to administration and conferences. Thus, for each peer coach's work the program realizes an advantage of about four hours a semester. This amount may seem insignificant but multiplied by the three or four peer coaches that a director can manage without undue strain, the benefit translates into an increase of 12 to 16 "found" coaching sessions.

2. The program aids the educational development of both the peer coaches and the coachees. For example, one young woman who discovered her outstanding coaching ability decided to become a forensics professional. Today she directs forensics at a midwestern college. Another peer coach merited these comments from the Director of Forensics recorded on Form A:

> This session confirms my overall impression of your excellence as a coach. I wish I owned a big company, and I'd put you in charge of training employees in communication skills. I'd have every confidence that in every way --in both management and teaching areas--you'd be highly competent.

Before the age of 30 this coach had become the Director of Marketing at a main office of the world's largest accounting firm. In this capacity she has pioneered her role of communication consultant for the partners.

Coachees also attest to the educational benefits from the program. One typical comment from Form B reads: "I see an overall improvement in my performance at tournaments--a lot of which is attributed to [the peer coach]." And another coachee claims: "[The peer coach's] experience and talent were beneficial to her ability to point out my weaknesses and to give advice for improvement." On yet another Form B, a coachee praises a peer coach for making her aware of negative delivery habits and teaching her how to use transitions.

Overwhelmingly, the file records show that peer forensics coaching can contribute significantly to the educational development of the team members involved.

3. The program provides a systematic way to appraise peer coaching. Even without a managerial system, peer coaching often takes place, having been initiated by team members who want to be helpful. Although such expansive efforts are commendable, they do not generate any data that can serve as the basis for grading. Nor can incidental peer coaching be counted on to be regular or goal-directed. The MBO forensics peer coaching system, however, prevents the fragmentation of effort, provides grading criteria, and collects input from the three individuals who interact in the process.

Program Weaknesses

1. At times, administering the program can be difficult. When the system was in its initial stage, keeping track of the three forms was a problem. After the Peer Coaching Credit Record Sheet (see Appendix, page 15) was put into use, that difficulty abated. The only other administrative problem is scheduling the Performance Appraisal (Step 2) and Performance Progress Review Conference (Step 3) between the first and second tournaments when coaching demands on the Director of Forensics are especially heavy. Early guidance and goal setting for peer coaches is important so that Steps 2 and 3 can be slotted without time loss through postponement.

2. Some coachees do not take the program seriously. They do not understand the importance of scheduling and keeping peer coaching appointments. If they show up at a session, they resist focusing on tasks, preferring small-talk or some other diversion. Peer coaches rightly view such behavior as a threat to their own objectives; often they become anxious and wonder what they can do to improve the situation.

This undesirable attitude of a coachee, however, is not a totally negative factor in the peer coaching process because it provides a turnabout challenge for the coach. The Director of Forensics can speak assuringly that the coachee is mirroring behavior sometimes seen in the classroom and then can work with the peer coach on ways to effect attitude change. Perhaps the most successful measure for giving an industrious tone to the process is scheduling the peer coaching observation session at the early prescribed time (between the first and second tournaments). If this step is handled professionally, even nonchalant coachees will be able to grasp how their role can contribute

to individual, team, and institutional educational goals. Additionally, for the peer coach this session can be a means of building credibility.

Conclusion

Intercollegiate forensics, with its constant demand for coaching and its mandate to educate,[10] provides an environment for the development and study of peer coaching. From one corner of the forensics community has come an MBO peer coaching program designed to increase the coaching staff and render educational benefits to the participants. This paper describes how the system was adapted from a school administrative personnel appraisal model and how it operates. Proven workable and beneficial, the program can be modified to meet the particular needs of other forensics teams or can serve as the starting point for yet other approaches.

Notes

[1]Literature in the field of education is replete with studies on peer tutoring in a variety of disciplines, but not in speech communication. See, for example, Ora Sterling Anderson and Laura J. Smith, "Peer Tutors in a College Reading Laboratory: A Model that Works," Reading Improvement 24.4 (1987): 238-47; Mary P. Deming, "Peer Tutoring and the Teaching of Writing," Paper presented at the Meeting of the Southeastern Writing Center Association, Mobile, AL, 17-19 April 1986, Dialog, ERIC, ED 276 019; J. H. C. Moust, et al, "Peer Teaching and Higher Level Cognitive Learning Outcomes in Problem-Based Learning," Higher Education 18 (1989): 737-42; and Gabrielle Wepner, "Successful Math Remediation: Training Peer Tutors," College Teaching 33.4 (1985): 165-67.

[2]Robert E. Slavin, "Learning Together: Cooperative Groups and Peer Tutoring Produce Significant Academic Gains," American Educator Summer 1986: 13. See also Sinclair Goodlad and Beverley Hirst, Peer Tutoring: A Guide to Learning by Teaching (New York: Nichols Publishing, 1989); Muriel Harris, "Peer Tutoring: How Tutors Learn," Teaching English in the Two-Year College 15.1 (1988): 28-33; and Michael Webb and Wendy Schwartz, "Children Teaching Children: A Good Way to Learn," PTA Today 14.1 (1988): 16-17.

[3]Ross H. Webber, Marilyn A. Morgan, and Paul C. Browne, Management: Basic Elements, 3rd ed. of Managing Organizations (Homewood: Irwin, 1985) 356.

[4]William B. Castetter and Richard S. Heisler, Appraising and Improving the Performance of School Administrative Personnel (Philadelphia: Center for Field Studies, Graduate School of Education, U of Pennsylvania, 1971). The process model is found on p. 38. For other applications of MBO, see Deborah Britt Roebuck, "An MBO Approach to Teaching Organizational Communication," Bulletin of the Association for Business Communication 52.1 (1989): 26-28 and David E. Terpstra, et al., "The Effects of MBO on Levels of Performance and Satisfaction among University Faculty," Group and Organization Studies 7 (1982): 353-66.

[5]One criticism of the MBO system is that it is time-consuming. See Webber, Morgan, and Browne, p. 353. Inasmuch as time is at a premium for the Director of Forensics, shortcuts needed to be built into the system.

[6]At West Chester University students involved in special projects such as this program are able to receive credit under SPC 399: Directed Studies. The Director of Forensics is granted one-quarter load reduction for carrying out the role but is given no extra remuneration for supervising SPC 399 projects in forensics.

[7]"Experienced speech/debate team member" is defined as one who has competed for at least one semester in a minimum of four intercollegiate forensics tournaments.

[8]To the author's knowledge, no systematic study of coaching stages has been conducted. In instructing her peer coaches, she delineates these stages: Orientation, Early Analysis, Substantive Analysis, Delivery, Polishing, and Follow-Up. For one type of systematic coaching study, see Carolyn Keefe, "Verbal Interactions in Coaching the Oral Interpretation of Poetry," National Forensic Journal 3.1 (1985): 55-69.

[9]Inasmuch as both members of the coaching dyad are students as well as peers, a means of differentating between them is needed. The coined term "coachee" will be used for the recipient of coaching.

[10]George Ziegelmueller and Donn W. Parson, "Strengthening Educational Goals and Programs," in American Forensics in Perspective, ed. Donn W. Parson (Annadale: SCA, 1984) 37-48.

Appendix

FORM A: RATING SHEET FOR OBSERVATION
OF PEER FORENSICS COACH

_____ _____ _____
PEER COACH COACHEE APPRAISER

Criteria Rating Scale: 4 excellent; 3 good; 2 fair; 1 poor
Total Points: 21-24=A; 15-20=B; 9-14=C; 3-8=D

POINTS CRITERIA

_____ 1. Appropriateness of goal(s) for this coaching session

_____ 2. Accuracy in identifying coachee's strengths and weaknesses

_____ 3. Reinforcement of coachee's strengths

_____ 4. Ability to modify coachee's weaknesses

_____ 5. Utilization of allotted time

_____ 6. Appropriateness of goal(s) for next coaching session

_____ TOTAL POINTS _____ GRADE

Goal(s) for this session: _____

_____

Goal(s) for next session: _____

_____

Goal(s) for self and coachee (to be reached before or by the end of the third tournament): _____

_____

_____

FORM B: RATING SHEET FOR COACHEE'S
APPRAISAL OF PEER FORENSICS COACH

_____ _____
PEER COACH COACHEE APPRAISER

Criteria Rating Scale: 4 excellent; 3 good; 2 fair; 1 poor
Total Points: 21-24=A; 15-20=B; 9-14=C; 3-8=D

POINTS	CRITERIA
_____	1. Cooperation in working out coaching schedules
_____	2. Dependability in keeping appointments
_____	3. Skill in explaining procedures/concepts/techniques
_____	4. Ability to identify coachee's weaknesses and make suggestions for improvement
_____	5. Understanding of coachee's psychological needs
_____	6. Interest in coachee's educational development

_____ TOTAL POINTS _____ GRADE

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

FORM C: RATING SHEET FOR PEER COACHING LOG

PEER COACH	COACHEE	APPRAISER

Criteria Rating Scale: 8 excellent; 6 good; 4 fair; 2 poor
Total Points: 42-48=A; 30-41=B; 18-29=C; 6-17=D

POINTS	CRITERIA
_____	1. Promptness in making contacts with coachee
_____	2. Judgment in spacing coaching sessions
_____	3. Accuracy in identifying coachee's strengths and weaknesses
_____	4. Creativity in dealing with coachee's strengths and weaknesses
_____	5. Sensitivity/understanding in handling post-tournament ballot review
_____	6. Success in reaching coaching goal(s)
_____	TOTAL POINTS _____ GRADE

GRADE SUMMARY

Form A 25% _____

Form B 25% _____

Form C 50% _____

Coaching Grade (one Credit) _____

PEER COACHING CREDIT RECORD SHEET

Fall_____ Spring_____ 19_____

PEER COACH	S.S.#	COACHEE	DATE OF OBSERVATION	LOG	FORM A	FORM B		GRADE
						OUT	IN	
17								18

Preliminary Step: Declaration of Intent	Student notifies D. of F. of intent to coach	D. of F. notifies coach of Step 1 date				
Step 1: Pre-Appraisal Planning Conference	Coaches and D. of F. clarify educational goals	D. of F. reviews coaching stages and importance of session goals	D. of F. discusses performance standards	D. of F. explains appraisal procedures	Coaches select coachees	D. of F. and coaches discuss link between performance standards and appraisal procedures with team educational goals
Step 2: Performance Appraisal	D. of F. observes coaching session	D. of F. writes evaluation				
Step 3: Performance Progress Review Conference	D. of F. and coach discuss observed session and unobserved sessions, review goals and progress toward attainment	D. of F. offers counsel on problems encountered by coach				
Step 4: Individual Development Program	Coach sets coaching goals for end of semester	Coach assesses and records progress in goal attainment				
Step 5: Post-Development Program Review	D. of F. collects coach's log	D. of F. evaluates log and assigns grade	D. of F. returns log and three appraisal forms to coach	D. of F. offers opportunity for registering again for program		

Fig. 1 Model of Peer Forensics Coaching Program ("Coach"/"Coaches" always refers to peer coach/peer coaches.)